

Hebrews 13:13-25

“Sacrifices to God”

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I. Introduction

The appeal has been made, “*The chief sacrifice*” has been once for all offered not by temple priests but by “God the Son” the offering of Himself out side the temple the first testament has been fulfilled by Jesus as He had said in, Matthew 5:17-18 saying, “*Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill. For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled.*” **Is there nothing left for these Hebrews to sacrifice to God? What offering do followers of the Jewish Messiah now make?** This is the closing words being written by the author of Hebrews as he answers this question.

II. Vs. 13-14 What to offer God?

Vs. 13-14 The Author takes his final few words to exhort his 1st century Hebrew believers to not follow the false teachers back to placing their faith in the sacrificial Jewish system. I can only imagine how difficult it was for some of these Hebrews who were being torn from their traditions to stay with trust in Jesus alone, to do so would “bear His reproach” which would have meant exclusion from their Jewish brethren.

The mention of not having “**HERE**” a “*continuing city*” is speaking about “**here on earth**” is reminding them that they they are being threatened with exclusion from public worship in Jerusalem, the “*Holy City*” they will not be excluded from worshipping a **the true** “*Holy City*”. Yes, the temple was an ancient wonder of the world and they would no longer be permitted to enter through the “*Eastern or Golden Gate*” because they had embraced Jesus who is far more beautiful they they earthly gate. He said of Himself in John 10:7-11 that He Himself was, “*the door of the sheep. All who ever came before Me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not hear them. I am the door. If anyone enters by Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture.*” Their fear was that they would no longer be able to abide in the tabernacle when they ought to remember Jesus words in John 15:4 that they were to, “*Abide in Jesus.... As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me.*” **The fear was in losing the losing the symbols when the substance had come; in losing religion while gaining heavenly relationship!** The point being brought out is that followers of Jesus must be willing to go out from the Levitical system even if doing so would bare reproach by their fellow Jews. They couldn’t keep the Levitical sacrificial system and by a follower of Jesus! The moment Jesus dies upon the cross the veil of the Temple was torn in two, and the Levitical sacrifices ceased to be a part of God’s plan as the substance replaced the symbol.

III. Vs. 15-21 Four characteristics

Vs. 15-16 This letter was written to the Jew’s and sacrifice was extremely important to them; they were purified by sacrifices, sin was dealt with by sacrifices such acting was ingrained in their life through obedience to the First Testament. They no doubt wondered what part “sacrifice” was to play in their life in the New Testament, did God still demand obedience to the sacrificial system if not for atonement in some other way? The simple answer is YES! Hebrews 13:15 “**Therefore by Him let us continually offer the sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name.**” A “**sacrifice**

of praise to God is now what they and us are to offer to God but what does such an offering look like? Verses 15-19 give us **four characteristics** of this “*sacrifice of praise to God*”!

1. Vs. 15a **BY HIM CONTINUALLY**: There are two things I notice to start with about this “*sacrifice of praise to God*” that is different: ***First*** is that ***where*** such “*sacrifice of praise to God*” ***ORIGINATES*** as we are clearly told that that what we offer is “***BY HIM***”! Yes, ***we offer to Him but we can only do so BY Him!*** ***Second*** the “*sacrifice of praise to God*” is ***not situational*** but are to be offered **CONTINUALLY**! We are not to be evaluating whether such “*sacrifice of praise to God*” is warranted because it meets our criteria and expectation. Instead we are to offer to God as Paul wrote to the Thessalonians in 1 Thessalonians 5:18 “***in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.***”
Losing the right to no longer be able to offer animal sacrifices from the Aaronic priesthood wouldn’t stop or hinder the offering of the sacrifices of praise that all believers were to offer. This was something that the Rabbi that was before the Christian era in Alexandria Egypt spoke about saying, “*They offer the best sacrifice who glorify with hymns the Savior and benefactor, God.*”
2. Vs. 15b-16 **WORD AND DEED**: The first thing we note about our “*sacrifice of praise to God*” is that it is NOT just verbal but based upon verses 15-16 that it is to be in Word and Deed. God no longer wants a grain offering, He wants the fruit of your lips. The Psalmist said in Psalm 7:17, “*I will praise the LORD according to His righteousness, and will sing praise to the name of the LORD Most High.*” The sacrifice to God is praise from our lips as the word “PRAISE” is “hallelujah” and that is what God wants us to offer to Him continually our “hallelujahs”. But God doesn’t just want our “*sacrifice of praise to God*” from our mouths He wants them in our actions as well. If our verbal praise is not matched by our physical action of doing good and sharing, then it’s not a “*sacrifice of praise to God*”. True worship involves action if it is to honor God. Out LIPS must match our LIFE as these are to be inseparable. James said in 1:27 that the “*Pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their trouble, and to keep oneself unspotted from the world.*” The “*sacrifice of praise to God*” that we offer is with our hands as much as it is with our lips as we do good to one another and minister whenever, wherever and whatever to the needs of others in Jesus’ name. Having said that they have offered a better sacrifice because it is of praise, the author now speaks of the obligation that such praise should generate practically to our fellow man. “doing good” must be the byproduct of our praise to God. The word “share” in the Greek means to make one’s self a partner with those who are in need. These persecuted believers are being told that true praise towards God is made visible when we share what God has given us to others. To be clear I’m not speaking of **communism** which says, “*What’s yours is mine!*” Instead we are talking about **Common-ism** which says, “*What’s mine is yours!*”
3. Vs. 17 **UNITY**: The author writes, “*Obey those who rule over you*” and then goes on to clarify chiefly whom he had in mind as “*they watch over your souls*”! Clearly this is a reference to those who teach the word and the contrast is against those whom some of them have obeyed that were teaching false doctrine. The phrase “*Let them do so with joy and not with grief, for that would be unprofitable for you*”; suggest that there is a direct benefit to the hearer of truth as there is for the speaker of truth! The unity that is associated with “*sacrifice of praise to God*” has to do with leadership in the body of Christ and specifically with submission given to Church leadership. Those that were given the responsibility to feed and lead God’s flock were to be given a respect that was seen as a “*sacrifice of praise to God*”! **This in no way was to suggest that such submission to leaders excused what can be blind obedience to tyrants but what the author was writing about was submission to godly appointed leaders were they were to be obeyed because they didn’t serve themselves but God and His people!** Such leaders are seen in

they will serve themselves and God and His people. Such readers are seen in that they are caring for the welfare of God's people and they alone will give account for their labor! The apostle John's last letter tells it like it is when he wrote, 3 John 1:4 "*I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth.*" Pastor's average stay at any church is between 5-7 years and the large reason for this is a lack of unity and maturity in the body he is called to serve. The sacrifices that is required upon God's servant can be great and when no spiritual progress is made many a servant can become overwhelmed and look for somewhere else to serve. The phrase, "Let them do so with joy" is aimed NOT at the pastor but at the sheep as it is the congregation's responsibility to help their pastor's out by obeying the Word of God taught through their pastor's and allowing the Holy Spirit to cause their own maturity. Again this isn't a statement that suggests that pastor's are "*infallible*" only that they act in manor that Paul wrote about in 1 Thessalonians 5:12-13 saying, "*we urge you, brethren, to recognize those who labor among you, and are over you in the Lord and admonish you, and to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake. Be at peace among yourselves.*" ***You will find a joy filled pastor when joy find a joy filled church and you will find a joy filled church when you find a joy filled church!***

4. Vs. 18-21 **PRAYER:** The phrase, "*Pray for us.*" indicates that the author was familiar to some of his readers. Further more the words, "*that we have a good conscience, in all things desiring to live honorably*", is an allusion to the authors conduct and heart towards them and the truth and suggest that some of these readers were being told lies about the writer and he wants them to not believe the lies and instead commit him to their prayers. Verse 19 tells us that at the current writing of this letter the author was under arrest and but was anticipating his soon release. Here are the specifics; prayer for the leaders in the church as prayer is what makes things move forward in the power and spirit of the Lord. The author isn't being arrogant when he writes in verse 18 "*Pray for us; for we are confident that we have a good conscience, in all things desiring to live honorably.*" What he is saying is that to the best of his knowledge that he had only ministered to the people faithfully not that he had done so perfectly! He had a clear conscience that he had acted and taught the people faithfully. Further more such faithfulness had made him a target and he had suffered for it and longed to be freed so that he may continue in it. Verses 20-21 describe what that faithfulness looked like as it would bring about their peace operating through God's power as they present God's truth! The author saw that the first testament was pointing to the new testament and as such was transitory as sinful humanity needed a "Living Priest" not just a dead prophet Jesus is like Aaron's rod that budded.

III. Vs. 22-25 Closing words

Vs. 22-25 The close of this letter is again an exhortation desiring them to heed what he has just written them. The author appeals with the readers not to become impatient with the counsel of this letter, he even makes an apology based upon the brevity of his words in this letter. The "*few words*" is under 10,000 which is far shorter than both Romans and 1st Corinthians and can be read from start to finish in just under an hour. Yet this is one of the most doctrinally rich letters in the Bible. We aren't given the specifics of Timothy's imprisonment but it is not surprising. The closing words are open to debate and not a clear understanding of where the readers resided. It could mean that the author was writing from Italy or that the author was with those Italian believers at the time of the writing.

